Training the Artillery Battery to Assume IO

Subject Area Artillery

EWS 2006

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# Report Documentation Page

*Form Approved*
*OMB No. 0704-0188*



| 1. REPORT DATE | 2. REPORT TYPE | 3. DATES COVERED |
|---|---|---|
| **2006** | | **00-00-2006 to 00-00-2006** |

| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER |
|---|---|
| **Training the Artillery Battery to Assume IO** | 5b. GRANT NUMBER |
| | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER |
| 6. AUTHOR(S) | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER |
| | 5e. TASK NUMBER |
| | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) **United States Marine Corps,Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University,2076 South Street, Marine Corps Combat Development Command,Quantico,VA,22134-5068** | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER |
| 9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) |
| | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) |

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
**Approved for public release; distribution unlimited**

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

15. SUBJECT TERMS

| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: | | | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. REPORT **unclassified** | b. ABSTRACT **unclassified** | c. THIS PAGE **unclassified** | **Same as Report (SAR)** | **7** | |

The Iraqi Theater of Operations (ITO) has largely become what can be termed Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) or Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). The use of supporting arms in general, and artillery in specific, is sporadic at best. Arguments have been made that artillery units, being the least engaged division units, are well suited for ancillary missions such as Information Operations (IO) and Civil Military Operations (CMO). CMO has been given to the artillery regiments and battalions as a secondary mission as directed in ALMAR 061-05. Whether IO becomes a tertiary mission officially or as a result of CMO mission creep, it is undoubtedly on the horizon for the artillery community. For artillery batteries to be used as provisional IO batteries minor changes in structure and major changes in training must take place.

The mission creep had already begun, even before the ALMAR outlining CMO as the secondary mission. The majority of IO billets are filled by Marines carrying the 08XX Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) designation. The logic behind the staffing of these billets is largely based on “effects based targeting,” the latest term to be over utilized and under defined. This paper will not attempt to analyze the merits of this trend but rather work on the premise that it is a forgone conclusion that artillery will inherit this mission.

The artillery battery is unique in that there is a myriad

of MOS’s and skill sets resident within a company sized unit. There is also a very robust leadership presence within the battery compared to other types of units. The battery T/O calls for one Captain, seven Lieutenants, ten Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCO), and a very strong Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) corps. This structure lends itself to the reorganization that will be necessary to complete this mission.

Typically an artillery battery is organized into a headquarters platoon and a guns platoon. The T/O allows for 138 Marines and should be arranged to mirror the structure of a typical rifle company with three platoons and a headquarters element. This mirror image should also include the fire team structure as Marines of an IO battery can expect to operate in small, autonomous units, as augmentation to a foot patrol for example. The key here is that the patrolling responsibility would remain with the unit that typically has that mission. That unit would have a small cadre of IO personnel available to go out, measure atmospherics, disseminate themes and messages, and observe measures of effectiveness. Having designated Marines with the primary mission of IO is the key to success here.

The headquarters section should be structured in the same vein as any higher headquarters with all staff functions represented. The dissolving of the liaison section, guns

platoon, and Fire Direction Center of the battery will free up five Lieutenants and six SNCOs. These Lieutenants will serve as the intelligence officer, operations officer, logistics officer, and platoon commanders with each section or platoon having a SNCO to act as the chief or platoon sergeant. The increased amount of planning and coordination associated with running an IO plan requires that these staff functions are adequately staffed and weighted to ensure success. Which Lieutenants and SNCOs perform which functions each will perform will be the battery commanders decision based on the unique skill sets of the individuals.

Thus far we have not identified shortfalls in staffing from within the artillery battery. There will however be subject matter experts not resident in the battery T/O that will need to be filled to ensure success. In relation to the intelligence section, expertise is needed from outside the unit. An effective IO plan is predicated on good intelligence. While there is little doubt that the Marines and officers of an artillery battery can adjust to many tasks, the resident knowledge required to fuse intelligence will be lacking. It will be necessary to augment the battery with at least one, if not two, Marines with an 02XX MOS in order to assess atmospherics and other intelligence related data and fuse that data into useable information for the planning of an IO

campaign. Tactical Psychological Operations Detachments are a high demand low density commodity that will not be parted with often if ever. Knowing that, it will be necessary for the provisional IO battery to have ready access to these Marines or Soldiers for the development of themes, messages, and products. The same goes for printing capable units in theater. Collocation and access must be made available.

Increased training is a requirement for any unit who is to undertake this additional duty. The standard so far seems to be a two week Mobile Training Team (MTT) hosted by Expeditionary Warfare Training Group Pacific (EWTGPAC) that deals mostly with IO capabilities that are not resident at the tactical level. Jamming capabilities of Amphibious Ready Group Shipping are not relevant at the tactical level and that is what is being taught with the MTTs. For the staff of the battery, the preferred training regimine would include either the Joint Information Warfare (JIWSOC) or Naval Information Warfare (NIWSOC) course. Training for the remainder of the Marines of the battery would revolve around training received by the staff at the JIWSOC or NIWSOC courses. This training would be augmented by MTTs from IO and intelligence specialists that would focus on the tactical level of IO, preferably with Marines that had applied IO in the ITO.

The Pre-Deployment Training Period (PTP) generally lasts

for six months and should be geared towards the upcoming deployment. Historically this is not the case. Marine units scheduled for a deployment to Okinawa normally execute a Combined Arms Exercise (CAX) at the Marine Corps Air Group Combat Center (MCAGCC). The subsequent deployment atrits the combat effectiveness of the battery to a level requiring remedial training upon return to CONUS. This is un acceptable from an IO perspective. Training should be focused on IO for the entire six month work up period leading up to the deployment. This will require that artillery training requirements in support of infantry and other maneuver units will be taken up by other batteries in the battalion. Maintenance requirements for gear not essential to the IO mission such as howitzers, Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System (AFATDS), and engineering assets will also need to be taken by other batteries to enable battery personnel to continue training without the inhibitions associated with the daily operations of an artillery battery. With the majority of the senior leadership in the battery needing to be trained, perhaps off site, day to day operations become untenable. If this is unable to happen, training will be piece meal and a battery with the primary task of IO would be less effective.

The artillery battery is uniquely qualified to assume the mission of IO. The T/O structure, training, and flexibility of

command structure ensure success. The only variable is the training that will be received to prepare the battery for this mission. Changes must be incorporated into the PTP to allow the training of battery personnel and incorporation of individual augmentees from other units.